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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000679

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR; JOINT  
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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN BOYS DESCRIBE BEATING BY SETTLERS AND  
ALLEGE IDF COMPLICITY

REF: A. 08 JERUSALEM 1429  
[1](#)B. 06 JERUSALEM 1918  
[1](#)C. 05 JERUSALEM 5550  
[1](#)D. 05 JERUSALEM 4848  
[1](#)E. 05 JERUSALEM 1459  
[1](#)F. 05 JERUSALEM 1142  
[1](#)G. 04 JERUSALEM 3890  
[1](#)H. 04 JERUSALEM 3705

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Three Palestinian shepherd boys were attacked and beaten by settlers from Ma'on in the south Hebron hills on April 5, according to the boys and a volunteer from Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). The children's accounts given to CPT immediately following the incident, and to Poloff eight days later, are consistent in describing the role of settlers from Ma'on, but diverge in details about the role of an IDF unit. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Three boys from Juwayya encampment, north of Ma'on settlement and the Palestinian village of al-Tuwani told Poloff on April 13 that they were attacked by settlers from Ma'on in the south Hebron hills on April 5. The boys, aged 10, 12, and 15, said that they were tending a flock of sheep on the afternoon of April 5, north of route 317, which runs between their home in Juwayya to the north, and the settlement to the south. The boys said they had followed the sheep into an area adjacent to, but still north of, the road because the sheep had wandered into a Palestinian farmer's field and were attempting to graze on crops. (Note: The boys spoke to Poloff in the presence of their mother, and the mayor of al-Tuwani (pop. 280), where the boys attend school. Over the course of an hour, the eldest boy provided most of the narrative. End note.)

[1](#)3. (C) The private head of security for Ma'on, whom the boys said they know as "Dali", approached them and, armed with a weapon, demanded they leave the area. Fearing for the safety of their livestock, they said, they departed north towards their home, with the livestock and two others -- a brother and an uncle -- when they were stopped in a valley by an IDF jeep and five soldiers. The group became separated and the three youngest were told to return to route 317 and the entrance to Ma'on. When the boys refused, the officer in charge of the soldiers slapped each one in the face, they said. After the three youngest boys began to walk back towards the settlement, three to four additional jeeps reportedly came and escorted the older boys and the livestock home.

[1](#)4. (C) When the youngest boys arrived at the entrance to the settlement, they said the soldiers who detained them began talking with two settlers (neither one was "Dali") in Hebrew,

which none of the boys understood. When the IDF jeep and soldiers departed shortly thereafter, an additional seven to eight settlers appeared and took the boys inside the entrance of the settlement where they attacked and beat them, the boys said. They said this beating lasted 10 to 15 minutes and stopped when an IDF jeep was seen returning towards the settlement. The boys said they were released and left the area before the soldiers returned. They were met by family and volunteers from CPT and Operation Dove, who recorded their story and alerted the press. CPT's account described a "six masked settlers who kicked and punched the children."

15. (C) CPT volunteer Joy Ellison told Poloff by phone on April 10 that she was with the boys' family when they returned from the settlement following the attack. Her accounting of the boys' story immediately after the attack was largely consistent with the account the boys gave Poloff on April 13, but differed in some respects, including the number of settlers involved in the attack, and the presence of the IDF during the actual beating. CPT accounts did not mention the slaps allegedly received from the IDF officer. Ellison said IDF soldiers in the area are too quick to take direction from the head settlement guard. She said she found the boys' story credible, particularly in light of the apparent rotation of new soldiers into the area only one day prior. Ellison said the new soldiers are "among the worst," in terms of providing protection to area Palestinians, that she has encountered during more than one year volunteering with CPT in al-Tuwani.

Comment

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16. (C) Incidents of Ma'on settlers abusing children and farmers from al-Tuwani and surrounding areas have been extensively documented through open source and front channel reporting since at least 2004 (see reftels). It is plausible that a group of settlers from Ma'on, known for its extremism, would participate in such an attack. Much more troubling are the allegations that IDF soldiers and an officer, who are charged with protecting area school children, were themselves abusive towards the children, or complicit in leaving them alone with the settlers. Eight days after the attacks, the boys' stories are not completely consistent with prior accounts, but we judge their allegations of IDF complicity to be sufficiently credible as to merit further investigation. End comment.

WALLES